

Meeting Notes



Downtown Action Team

December 1, 2004

8:00 a.m.

Embassy Suites

1040 P Street

<i>Members Present</i>	Jon Camp Jim Fram Lynnie Green Matt Harris Deb Johnson Jessica Kennedy Dan Massoth (absent) Lori McClug (absent)	Annette McRoy (absent) Sachit Nadkarni (absent) Will Scott Kent Seacrest Nader Sepahpur Mike Sisk Clay Smith	Cecil Steward (absent) Jane Stricker Ed Swotek (absent) Becky Van de Bogart Michelle Waite Jon Weinberg Terry Werner
<i>Others Present</i>	Jason Albers Don Arambula Brenda Bergman David Cary Jeff Cole George Crandall	Jennifer Dam Karl Fredrickson Brandon Garrett Ann Harrell Marvin Krout Dallas McGee	Polly McMullen Kent Morgan Brian Praeuner Marc Wullschleger Michele Abendroth

Jon Weinberg opened the meeting at 8:03 a.m. He asked those present to introduce themselves. He stated that there was a great turnout at the workshop the previous evening and then introduced George Crandall and Don Arambula of the consulting firm Crandall Arambula.

Mr. Crandall noted that from a brief review of the response sheets completed by the participants at the workshop the previous evening, they look positive and there is support for the issues. He stated that the next step is implementation. They will provide the cost estimates for the public infrastructure to support the proposed projects. A challenge is to create momentum and begin implementing as soon as possible. We need immediate success so we need to pick small projects and work into large ones. He added that the date for the fourth public meeting has not been established yet.

He then reviewed the PowerPoint presentation from the workshop. The land use framework diagram has been updated based on the comments received at the last meeting. The fundamental concept diagram is useful to look at the big idea. The capacity diagram measures the amount of new development on the blocks. They need to see if they can accommodate the projected market demand. There are a number of frameworks, including employment and government, housing, open space and civic/cultural. The public realm is also very important in downtown and has to do with the ability to attract new investment in downtown. There are many research papers focusing on the importance of livability in downtown. The findings conclude that the attractive cities will thrive and the unattractive ones will fail.

Over 40% of the land in the downtown is in the public realm and 60% is private ownership. There were a number of suggestions for the public realm including a public square, a festival garden, a greenway, the M Street Park blocks, and an arts corridor.

The public square site picked at the last workshop was at 13th and P but many people felt it was too small. It was suggested that the public square run from P to Q Street. 13th Street would go through but it could be closed off for special events. It is suggested that there be a local service street along the building frontage because that is necessary to activate retail. All great squares have several fundamental characteristics including being in the center of the City, located at a crossroads, surrounded by buildings with active ground floor uses, and having large paved areas for holding public events.

The retail/parking concept has been refined from the previous meeting. The primary retail street is P Street. They are suggesting a retail anchor at the end of the block. The theater will anchor the other end and will bring a significant number of people into downtown.

Centennial Mall was not resolved at the last meeting. Fifty percent of the people preferred a modified scheme and 50% preferred the greenway scheme. There is consensus that the green space should run from the capitol to the Historical Society building. The question is whether to leave the north and south ends as pedestrian only. They are suggesting that not be done. They are suggesting to be able to drive around the block. The concept is that it be a driving zone on N and O Streets. Ms. Waite noted that there is a lot of pedestrian traffic from the University to the southern parking lots.

They have also proposed the creation of new park blocks at M Street. There is a suggestion of a park block from 12th Street to Centennial Mall.

It was suggested that a space be provided for festival events at 11th and 12th Streets on M Street on the north side of the church. There are a lot of opportunities to tie in with the 12th Street Arts Corridor. The landscaping on this street would be different from any other street.

An on-street bike system is proposed on 11th and 12th Streets and M and N Streets. It was questioned whether you can have angled parking with on-street bike lanes. You can if you have back-in angle parking as it much safer. The off-street bike system is more of a recreational route and an amenity in the city. The on-street routes are more for the commuters.

There are two shuttle routes proposed. Shuttle A connects the University to the downtown and the Haymarket. Shuttle B connects the Haymarket to the downtown and the State Capitol, Near South Neighborhood, and the County/City Building.

There are a couple options in the rail yards. One is housing and open space and the other is the convention center/arena. One of the requirements of having the convention center/arena in this location is that there be a major roadway in the area. Providing access to this kind of activity is important. Locating the convention center/arena works well here because it is in an edge condition. Although there is not a market for a large convention center here today, there may be in the future, and we need to allow for future expansion.

Mr. Crandall concluded his presentation by asking if there are any questions.

Mr. Smith asked about the size of the square envisioned at 13th Street. Mr. Crandall responded that they feel it is appropriately sized for the community.

Ms. Johnson commented that currently downtown uses 90,000 square feet and we have no room left. We are ready to grow and need the extra space. The concern with the current location for the festival area is parking. She suggested considering moving it to Gold's Square. She feels we could do a lot more in that location and would minimize traffic problems. She also offered the services of Updowntowners in terms of planning the public space.

Ms. Waite asked the consultants to expand on the transit system location. Mr. Crandall stated that it was important not to get too far from the retail street and to connect it to the University. Q Street appeared to be the best place for it.

Mr. Werner asked if there was a consideration for utilizing the Amtrak tracks as he believes maybe someday it could be a valuable tool for the community. Mr. Crandall stated that the idea is not to remove it but to relocate it.

Mr. Smith stated that there has been some discussion that additional federal office space may be needed and asked where they envision that being. Mr. Sisk stated that during the budget process, they looked at expansion of the federal offices. Currently, they do not know what the courts are going to do, but they have said there will be minimal expansion needs in Lincoln.

Mr. Weinberg stated that we need to address parking issues in order to encourage office development in downtown. Mr. Crandall stated that in order to compete we need the parking structures, but the natural progression is to move away from building parking structures. The number one priority for the parking structures is retail.

Mr. Seacrest stated that he loves the work that has been done so far, but asked if we will look at some regulatory schemes and do the fine-tuning reality check. Mr. Crandall stated there will most likely be an implementation strategy session with the City after the first of the year. Mr. Seacrest asked specifically what the committee's role in the process is. Mr. Crandall stated that the committee is key when advising them about the implementation strategy. The next step is the strategy session with the City and then a follow-up work session with the committee before the public workshop. Mr. Werner stated that he believes this committee's role is to create the vision, not to have a reality check. He believes this is a great plan and doesn't believe this is a place to make compromises at this point. Mr. Seacrest added that in order to take the vision to implementation, there is a regulatory process that needs to be followed, or it will stay a vision.

Mr. Weinberg stated that they look forward to continuing the process and then adjourned the meeting at 9:31 a.m.

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